DRIEHAUS, DAVIS UNVEIL NEW STUDY IN SUPPORT OF BRENT SPENCE BRIDGE PROJECT

Lawmakers Call on Congressional Leaders to Make Brent Spence a Top Priority

WASHINGTON, DC—Representatives Steve Driehaus (D-OH) and Geoff Davis (R-KY) have unveiled a new study by the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) underscoring the benefits of the Brent Spence Bridge rehabilitation project. Reps. Driehaus and Davis sent this study with a letter to House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (T&I) Chairman James L. Oberstar (D-MN), and they reiterated their request of the chairman to make the Brent Spence project a top priority in the next surface transportation authorization.
The study and letter answered specific questions that Chairman Oberstar asked both lawmakers when they testified in support of the Brent Spence Bridge project before T&I's Subcommittee for Highways and Transit on April 28, 2009.

"This study reinforces what we already know about the Brent Spence Bridge project. The existing bridge cannot meet current demand, and supporting this project would have significant impact not only on our local economy, but on a critically important component of our national transportation system.
I again urge Chairman Oberstar to make the Brent Spence project a top transportation priority," said Rep. Driehaus.

Congressman Davis stated, “Anyone who sits on the Brent Spence Bridge day-in and day-out intuitively knows what the TTI study has confirmed: completing this project will produce tremendous benefits for the region and for our nation. The benefits include saved time and fuel for individuals and businesses, improved air quality from reduced vehicle idling, economic growth and job creation. Congressman Driehaus and I are pleased to continue building the case for this project in Congress.”

The TTI study concludes that completing the Brent Spence Bridge project would save 2.9 million person-hours of delay, 210,000 vehicle-hours of delay, and 1.22 million gallons of fuel every year. The TTI study also estimates that twenty years after the completion of the project, the $2.5 billion to $3 billion invested to complete the project would result in $18.9 billion in benefits for commuters, shippers, and manufacturers.

Earlier this month, Reps. Driehaus and Davis led a bipartisan group of 13 House members urging Chairman Oberstar and T&I Ranking Member John L. Mica (R-FL) to make the Brent Spence project a priority in the surface transportation authorization bill.

Text of the letter to Chairman Oberstar regarding the TTI study follows.

The Honorable James L. Oberstar

Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Oberstar:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you and the Highways and Transit Subcommittee on April 28, 2009, in support of a funding mechanism for nationally significant mega projects in the next surface transportation authorization.

The Brent Spence Bridge project will improve delivery times, reduce congestion costs resulting from excessive time spent in traffic, and improve national productivity and economic performance.

During the hearing you requested that we provide specific evidence as to how this project, if funded, would reduce travel time and improve productivity. In response to your request and to obtain relevant data from an objective expert source, our offices asked the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) to assess the potential benefits of the project based upon the considerations that you raised during the hearing.

In response to our request, TTI completed a study of the Brent Spence Bridge Replacement and Revitalization Project. They concluded that rehabilitation of the current bridge and construction of a new parallel bridge would substantially improve delivery times and reduce congestion costs from excessive time spent in traffic.

TTI concluded that with its current eight lanes, congestion attributable to the Brent Spence Bridge costs 3.6 million person-hours of delay each year for passenger cars and 240,000 vehicle-hours of delay for commercial vehicles. If the Brent Spence Bridge Project was completed today with fifteen lanes in service (via the rehabilitated current structure and new bridge), these numbers would drop to 710,000 person-hours of delay for passenger cars and 30,000 vehicle-hours of delay for commercial vehicles per year.

Additionally, with the current eight lanes, TTI estimates that 1.6 million gallons of fuel are wasted during one year. If the project were completed today, this number would fall to just 380, 000 gallons annually on the roads affected by the bridge.
Further, TTI estimates that without completion of the project, annual fuel wasted would be 5.7 million gallons per year by 2030.
With project completion this number would fall to just 2.1 million gallons of wasted fuel annually.

Twenty years after the completion of the project, TTI estimates that the initial investment of 2.5 to 3 billion dollars would result in a total project benefit to commuters, shippers and manufacturers of $18.9 billion (in 2008 dollars). The complete results of the TTI study are enclosed.

The Brent Spence Bridge is a nationally significant mega project. Completion of the project under the current system would require an allocation of more than the entire highway infrastructure budgets for both Ohio and Kentucky for more than a year.
The bridge is a key part of America's mid-west transportation infrastructure and is vital to commerce in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee.
An estimated $417 billion of freight (three- percent of GDP) crosses the Brent Spence Bridge every year with an expected increase in real dollars to $830 billion by 2030.
The planned expansion of the Norfolk Southern and CSX railways will bring even more freight to the I-71, I-74 and I-75 corridors that connect to the bridge.
Specifically, the proposed CSX facility in North Baltimore, Ohio will serve as a major rail freight hub.
Additionally, Norfolk Southern anticipates a spring 2010 opening of the Heartland Corridor from Norfolk, VA to Columbus, Ohio resulting in substantial increases to north-south truck traffic across the Ohio River (to and from the Columbus hub) and in particular across the Brent Spence Bridge.
The bottom line is that this is a vitally important commercial corridor, and the aging bridge does not adequately serve current volume and certainly cannot meet increasing demand.

The conclusion is clear. Congress must provide a funding mechanism for projects of national significance in the next surface transportation authorization. As we noted in our testimony, completion of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge project and the potential impact of the Brent Spence Bridge Project, as noted by TTI, are graphic examples of the critical need for Congress to act now in support of such projects.

We look forward to further dialog with you on the Brent Spence Bridge project and, most importantly, on provisions for the funding of projects of national significance in the next surface transportation authorization.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. Please feel free to contact either Aaron Wasserman at 225-2216 or Dan Adelstein 225-3465 if you have any questions

Sincerely,

Steve Driehaus
Member of Congress

Geoff Davis
Member of Congress

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